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ABSTRACT

Intended for counselors working in schools or residential child care settings, in child welfare and family preservation services, or in juvenile justice, this facilitator's guide outlines a workshop for children and adolescents growing up in single-parent families. The guide first presents a framework for a one-class or five-class workshop centered around a companion video. The bulk of the guide corresponds to the video, presenting suggestions for discussion prior to and after viewing the video, and discussion points geared toward specific parts of the video. The guide's appendix includes a sample invitation letter and permission form for the workshop, and handouts and worksheets for the workshop. The 18-minute video accompanying the guide is directed to children, and discusses definitions, and circumstances of single-parent families, such as death, divorce, adoption by a single parent, or out-of-wedlock birth. Children's emotional responses to these situations are also reviewed. In addition, the video lists seven serious problems children may encounter in single-parent families, such as neglect or abuse, substance abuse, or a parent's emotional devastation, and tips for seeking help for these situations. The parent's perspective is also presented in nine points. The video concludes with suggestions for children coping with challenges of a single-parent family, such as a divorced parent asking prying questions or speaking unkindly of the other parent. (HTH)

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Successful Parenting

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Part Six:

The Single Parent Family:

A Challenge For Children

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Facilitator's Guide

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Successful Parenting

Hi!

As a teacher and school counselor for 20 years, I worked with children, their teachers, and their parents or guardians. I'm convinced that children want to succeed and that parents and guardians do try to do a good job of raising their children. I believe that parenting is the ***toughest job*** *there is, and yet, it is the one for which we get very little training. I want to change that.*

Successful Parenting *has been produced to accomplish that goal. "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Children" and its companion video, "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Parents" are part of the* **Successful Parenting** *series. Each comes with a facilitator's guide.*

Also in the series is my "Heart of Parenting" package, consisting of "Self-Esteem is the Key," "Communication is Crucial," and "Discipline Makes the Difference," each of which comes with a facilitator's guide and a user's guide. There is also a workbook for parents on those three subjects. It parallels the videos and is written at a third to fourth grade reading level.

This "Heart of Parenting" package is also available for Spanish-speaking parents, with the tapes and the user's guides in Spanish and the facilitator's guide in English.

Also available are the companion tapes, "School Success Takes Teamwork: The Basics" and "School Success Takes Teamwork: Taming the Homework Monster."

I am delighted that you have selected my materials to use in your workshop for children of single parent families. It is my fervent hope that you and the children attending your workshop will view this video, enjoy it, discuss it, learn from it, apply what has been learned, and then tell others about it. I hope that all of the children touched by this workshop will be happier and have fewer problems both now and in the future.

Barbara Lynn Taylor

Barbara Lynn Taylor

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who,
while reading this manuscript,
not only found my errors,
but also shared their wisdom
and helped me gain valuable new perspective.

Dr. John Gannon
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Kevin Ross
Dr. Fran Troutman

Notes to Facilitators

Please use your own words, tailor the discussion to the children you're working with, and put lots of YOU into it. That's what will make <u>your</u> workshop special!

- *"Stage" directions and suggestions for your benefit will be shown in this typestyle.*

- **Things for you to say or paraphrase will be in this typestyle.**

- Information will appear in this typestyle.

What You Need to Conduct a Workshop

1. *The videotape "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Children." (This is copyrighted and may not be duplicated.)*

2. *A copy of each of the handouts found on pages 42-50 in this Facilitator's Guide for each child. (Please do duplicate these.)*

3. *A pencil for each participant.*

4. *This Facilitator's Guide.*

5. *A clock or timer.*

6. *Cards made up for the "Dear Al" activities.*

7. *A chalkboard and chalk or flip chart and markers. (Optional)*

8. *Energy, enthusiasm, and patience.*

Suggested Uses For this Video and this Facilitator's Guide

I. To conduct a one-class workshop for children

II. To conduct a five-class workshop for children

III. To work with children in Residential Child Care

IV. To use in Family-Centered Case Work

V. To Use in Family Preservation Work

VI. To use in Child Welfare Work

VII. To show parents and children at a Family Support Center

VIII. For use by Child Abuse Prevention workers

IX. For use by Juvenile Justice Workers

X. For professional school counselors to use in individual counseling sessions, in group counseling sessions, with families, or to use in doing workshops

XI. For psychologists and other professionals to send home so that children may view the tape in their homes

XII. To make available in libraries or parent resource centers for parents to check out for their children

Suggested Uses For this Video (continued)

A One-Class Workshop for Children

Suggested time frames for workshops one or two hours in length

• *Do Part I, "Before Viewing the Video"*	*5 minutes*
• *Distribute "My Own Plan" handout and explain its use. You may choose to distribute the other five handouts at this time or you may choose to distribute them when you come to the appropriate section in the workshop. Urge the children to take them home and share with parents or guardians.*	*5 minutes*
• *Show the video, "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Children"*	*18 minutes*
• *Using this Facilitator's Guide, discuss: The Introductory Part and the Main Part*	*17 minutes for a one-hour workshop*
You judge which sections should be emphasized to meet the needs of your group. I suggest you mark your facilitator's guide in pencil ahead of time as to how much time you plan to spend on each section.	*77 minutes for a two-hour workshop*
• *Summarize, go over "My Own Plan," set personal goals, and make commitments*	*5 minutes*

Suggested Uses For this Video (continued)

A Five-Class Workshop For Children

Suggested time frame for a five-class workshop
(50 minutes each) (Feel free to adjust this to fit your own schedule.)

Class 1	• *Do "Before Viewing the Video"*	*10 minutes*
	• *Watch the entire video*	*18 minutes*
	• *Do "The Introductory Part"*	*22 minutes*

Class 2	• *To review, show Section One of the video, "Ways Single Parent Families Happen"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section One*	*23 minutes*
	• *To review, show Section Two of the video, "When Families Become Single Parent Families Many Changes Happen"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section Two*	*23 minutes*

Class 3	• *To review, show Section Three of the video, "The Death of A Parent"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section Three*	*23 minutes*
	• *Do the activity, "Hooray For Parents!"*	*25 minutes*

Suggested Uses For this Video (continued)

A Five-Class Workshop For Children (continued)

Class 4	• *To review, show Section Four of the video, "Separation and Divorce"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section Four*	*10 minutes*
	• *To review, show Section Five of the video, "Problems Most Children of Single Parent Families Have No Matter How Their Families Became Single Parent Families"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section Five*	*17 minutes*
	• *To review, show Section Six of the video, "Seven Serious Problems Children Sometimes Have To Face"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section Six*	*17 minutes*

Suggested Uses For this Video (continued)

A Five-Class Workshop For Children (continued)

Class Five	• *To review, show Section Seven of the video, "How Single Parent Parents Feel"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section Seven*	*18 minutes*
	• *To review, show Section Eight of the video, "Suggestions for Children in Single Parent Families"*	*2 minutes*
	• *Discuss Section Nine*	*18 minutes*
	• *Do "Conclusion"*	*10 minutes*

Suggestions for the Facilitator

Consider using the forms in the back of this book.

Forms you may want to use to interest children in joining a workshop or group, in getting parental permission, or in informing the parents of the final plans for the workshop are in the back of this book on pages 42, 43, and 44. Feel free to duplicate or to adapt them for use with your particular group. You may want to cover up the page numbers before duplicating.

On the day of the workshop:

Welcome each of the children in your workshop individually, if possible. Try to find out their names and something about why they came to the workshop. You may want to survey the group either one-at-a-time or after they gather as to their ages and names. This will help you personalize your comments later as you lead the discussions.

It is important that you know your audience and that you try to use words and ideas they can understand.

For each of us to feel safe as we tell what we think and feel, we need to be sure that nothing will be repeated outside this group. Before we begin, let's all agree on confidentiality in this group. *(You may want to define "CONFIDENTIALITY" as "WHAT'S SAID HERE STAYS HERE.")* **Okay?**

As you lead the discussions, keep in mind that you want to challenge your children to think and to relate the ideas to their own situations. You don't want to put them on the spot or ask them to reveal personal information unless they want to.

Look for those outgoing, talkative members of your group. Involve them, and others will be likely to follow.

Use the skill of linking to show the connection between the comments participants made. This strengthens the lesson and builds the self-esteem and confidence of the members of the group.

Some children are auditory learners and will "get it" from the words they hear from you, the soundtrack of the video, and the comments of others present. Some are visual learners so they will learn best from the pictures in the video, the handouts, and words you write on a chalkboard or flipchart. Most people learn best when both modes are used, so they'll appreciate it if you use all techniques.

*Remember, **you don't have to answer every question that you're asked**. Often it's effective to toss a question back to the group. When group members express ideas, be careful not to shoot them down. If you really think they're way off base, you may want to try saying something like, "Okay, could we also look at it like this?"*

The intention of the next section called, "Before Viewing the Video," is to stimulate interest and to encourage the children to watch the video with a purpose.

NOTES:

I. BEFORE VIEWING THE VIDEO

Since this video is appropriate for children from elementary school through middle school, you will need to adapt the exact vocabulary to your own group.

Okay, you're ready. Take a deep breath. Begin the discussion.

1. **Each of you lives in a single parent family. Let's first tell what a <u>single parent family</u> is.** *Call on children to answer if they will. If not, you tell.* A family with one parent and one or more children living together.

2. **Who knows some of the ways that families become single parent families?** Never-married moms, adoptions, death of a parent, or separation and divorce. **Was your way one of those?** *Tread lightly!*

3. **I guess there are good things and hard things about living with just one parent. Who will share some of the good things?** *Take comments.* **Who will share some of the hard things?** *If there are no comments, share one you know of. It may lead to some comments from the children.*

4. **In just a minute, we're going to see a video about being a child in a single parent family. I think you'll learn some good ideas. You may feel even better about living in a single parent family after you've seen it.**

5. You may distribute the copies of all of the handouts now or you may want to give them out one at a time as you come to each part of the video. **I am giving you these handouts so you'll have reminders of what was said on the video without having to write down as many notes while you're watching. The handouts are yours to keep. I want you to take them home to review them yourselves and to share with your parents or guardians.** *You may decide the handouts would be helpful to give out and to send home to the parent whether the child can read or not.*

6. Now, if the children are able to write, give each participant a copy of "My Own Plan," which is on page 45. If you have a mixed group where some can write and some can't, you might choose:

a. not to give out the handout at all.
b. to help them to write their ideas yourself after the video is over.
c. to pair writers and non-writers up as buddies.
d. or you may have another idea.

Just please be sure you don't embarrass the ones who are less capable.

Here is a worksheet called, "My Own Plan."

I want you to write down ideas as you view the video and during the rest of the workshop. The left column is for those things you already do well and the right column is for the things you want to try.

As you watch this video, remember, nobody does it all right! Pat yourself on the back for those things you do well. If you hear a suggestion that sounds interesting, write it down and promise yourself to try it.

I have placed two seconds of black screen between the sections of this videotape so that you may stop it at various points, thus giving you some choices in the way you structure your workshop.
Here are some possibilities:

1. *Play the entire video at one time, then lead the discussion.*

2. *Play the first two-and-a-half minutes, stop the tape, discuss that part, play the remainder of the tape, and then discuss it.*

3. *Play the first two-and-a-half minutes, stop the tape, discuss that part, play the remaining sections one at a time, and lead a discussion between each one.*

Any of these three methods will work, but I suggest that to keep the attention of young children, you select #3 where you break it up into sections.

Do what feels right to you.

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So now, here is "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Children." It lasts about 18 minutes.

While the video is showing, unobtrusively observe each child in your workshop. Make note of any signs of discomfort, identification, agreement, disagreement, or amusement, and who showed them. This information will be useful to you in leading the ensuing discussions.

NOTES:

II. AFTER VIEWING THE VIDEO

Remind your group that, for them to get the most out of this workshop, they must be honest with themselves and with the other members of the group. Encourage them to be open in the discussion and to participate in the activities.

Be sure to listen carefully and be sensitive to their comments. Encourage your participants to communicate with each other.

*Be aware that some of the statements made in the video will elicit disagreement. Disagreement is good. It usually leads to lively, informative, meaningful discussions...**and that leads to learning!***

NOTES:

INTRODUCTORY PART

(The first 2 1/2 minutes of the video)

Incue (Beginning): Boy dreaming of his parents kissing and hugging; narrator indicating that's not how it is for the child viewing the video.

Outcue (Ending): Dr. Kimberly DeWindt-Robson describing a good family.

1. **The video started with a boy dreaming of his parents hugging and kissing. Do you think other children who live with one parent dream of seeing their parents together and all "lovey-dovey"? Do you have these dreams?** *Discuss.*

2. **Lots of kids in single parent families do have problems when they're young and when they grow up. Is that going to happen to you?** *Discuss.* **At the end of the video, we saw some things you can do so that you will grow up happy and successful...so you'll beat the odds. We'll discuss those later.**

3. **Do you remember any of the famous people the video mentioned who grew up in single parent families?** George Washington, Bo Jackson, and Oprah Winfrey. **Do you have any idea what made them succeed?** *Be open to ideas.*

4. **Are today's families the same as families were in the 1800's or early 1900's?** No, there are more and more single parent families, especially because of divorce.

5. **Do you remember what part of the American children will live in a single parent family before they're sixteen?** One-half. **So, maybe you're not as alone as you might have thought!**

6. **Let's make sure you know the definitions that were given on the video that have to do with divorced families:** *There is a handout on page 46. You may have already given out this handout. In that case,* **Look at your handout with the definitions on it.** *or* **Here is a handout with the information on it.** *Encourage the children to tell the words and definitions.*

a. **Child support**-The money needed to raise a child. One parent pays it to the other. **Is it always the father paying it to the mother?**

b. **Custodial parent**-The parent responsible for the care of the child after a divorce. **Do you remember how many dads have custody, according to this video?** One out of ten.

c. **Non-custodial parent**-The parent the child doesn't live with.

d. **Joint custody**-When the parents share in the care and responsibility for the child.

e. **SP families**-Families headed by one parent. The SP stands for "Single Parent."

f. **Visitation rights**-Permission for a non-custodial parent to visit with his/her child.

These definitions were not explained on the video. They have to do with other kinds of single parent families:

a. **Widow**-A woman whose husband died.

b. **Widower**-A man whose wife died.

c. **Pregnant**-When a woman has a baby growing inside of her.

d. **Adopt**-When an adult legally takes a child as his/her own.

TAPE FADES TO TWO SECONDS OF BLACK FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

7. **Do you think everything always goes smoothly in families with two parents? Yes or no? Can you give some examples?** *Be open to ideas.* **Do you remember the couple arguing at the washing machine? Do you think that arguing is common in families with two parents?** *Discuss.*

8. **Dr. Kimberly DeWindt-Robson told us what makes a good family. Do you remember what she said?** They care about one another and they are looking out for one another's best interests. **How can members of a family show they care? How do you want your family to show you that they care?** *Discuss.*

MAIN PART

(15 1/2 minutes)

Incue (Beginning): A teenage girl looking at pregnancy test; narrator talking.

Outcue (Ending): Boy riding down driveway on bicycle; narrator talking; music starts; pictures of faces move.

SECTION 1

Ways Single Parent Families Happen

Let's talk a little bit about the ways single parent families happen. Who can tell us one of the ways? *Use this information to discuss, letting the children take the lead.*

a. **A never-married woman has a baby**. Most often these are teenagers. Most of the time they didn't mean to get pregnant but sometimes they wanted to. Maybe they knew the father and didn't want to get married or maybe they didn't know who he was. Maybe the father didn't want the responsibility and he left. Sometimes women who are older than teenagers get pregnant by mistake and decide to keep the child. **There are three and one-half million never-married mothers in the United States now. Do you know any never-married mothers and their children? What is it like for them and their kids?** *Discuss.*

b. **An older woman has a baby.** Some women thought they wanted to marry a man but either didn't find the right man or if they married, did not have children. Then they decided they wanted a baby even if it meant raising the baby themselves. Some never wanted to marry but still wanted a baby. **Have any of you ever known an older woman who had a baby alone? What was it like for that woman and her child?** *Discuss.*

c. **A single person adopts a baby.** The person might be a man or a woman and might be young or old. He/She might find the child in the United States or might go overseas to adopt the child. The child might be an infant or might be an older child. **Sometimes a single person adopts a baby. Has anyone known of a family like this?** *Discuss.*

d. **A single family member takes over the parental duties.** It might be an aunt, uncle, grandmother, or grandfather. This happens if either parent doesn't want to raise the child, if either parent thinks the child would be better off with the family member, or if neither parent can raise the child because of poor health, involvement with drugs, military service, jail, or death. **Occasionally we hear of a family member taking over parental duties. Have you heard of a family like this?** *Discuss.*

e. **One parent dies and the other parent keeps the child.** A parent may die because of an accident, a sudden illness, suicide, or after he/she is sick for a long time. **Does anyone know of a situation where one parent died? What happened?** *Discuss.*

f. **Parents separate and may later divorce.** This is the most common way that families become single parent families. **I'll bet lots of you know of families in which parents have separated and/or divorced.** *Discuss.*

Here are two topics you may wish to explore. Use them for whatever time you can allot.

So, there are lots of kids living in single parent homes. Which way did you come to be in a single parent family? What do you remember about when it happened? *Discuss.* **How many other single parent kids do you know?** *Discuss.* **Have you ever tried to help someone when they first became an SP family? What did you do?** *Discuss.*

Raise your hand if you think that children cause families to become SP families. *If anyone does raise a hand, sensitively let him or her explain.* **How many of you think that the children can make an SP family go back into being a two-parent family?** *Let the children explain, but conclude by reminding them that the video said they didn't cause it and they can't fix it. It's a grown-up problem.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

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SECTION 2

When Families Become SP Families,
Many Changes Happen

Think back to when yours became a SP family. What changes do you remember happening? Maybe yours has been an SP family all along. In what ways do you think your family is different from a family with two parents living together? *Use the following list to lead discussions on the points of interest to your group. Encourage the children to share as much as possible.*

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SP FAMILIES
AND
FAMILIES WITH TWO PARENTS LIVING TOGETHER

Children who live in single parent families might find they:

1. Miss the other parent.
2. Have less money.
3. Have to move into a less expensive neighborhood.
4. Have to leave their school.
5. Have to leave their friends.
6. Are not able to participate in activities because there's no one to take them to practices, etc.
7. Have to go to an after-school program instead of going to their own home and neighborhood friends in the afternoons.
8. Have to take care of themselves more.
9. Have to take care of little brothers or sisters.
10. Are given necessities for birthdays instead of fun stuff.
11. Have a parent who's too tired to even listen to problems.
12. Are feeling hurt because people often ask them to do things with or for a parent they don't have.
13. Feel awkward because their family isn't like other people's families.
14. Feel bitter and sorry for themselves because their absent parent is nowhere to be found.

Now, let's look at the positive side! Tell us some <u>good</u> things about living in a SP family!!

Encourage the children to help you make a list on your flip chart or chalkboard. Use these to fill in.

<u>Positive things that might be true for children living in a single parent family are that they:</u>

1. Might not have to worry about getting along with two parents.
2. May not have so many fights in their homes.
3. Might have more space in their homes for them and their stuff.
4. May have bedrooms in two homes
5. Might get to experience different communities if parents have homes in different places.
6. May be more involved with their extended family.
7. Might get two holiday or two birthday celebrations.
8. May have parents who try to see who can be the nicest and who can give the best presents.
9. Might get real close to their custodial parent.
10. May be allowed to be more independent.

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 3

The Death of a Parent

The video said that parents provide love, security, and material needs and that when a parent dies, things will never be the same again. How many of you have had a parent die? Could you tell us how old you were when it happened and what it was like for you? *(Sensitivity is called for here!)*

When really bad things happen, like the death of a parent, people first think it's all a bad dream and that they'll wake up soon. Have any of you had that experience? Could you tell us about it? *Discuss.*

Did you ever ask anybody <u>why</u> someone died? Did anyone ever ask you? What were the answers? *Discuss.* **Did you think they were hard questions? Do you remember what the video said?** There are no answers to questions like that. **Wouldn't it be nice if we had absolute understandable answers to tough questions?**

"Hooray For Parents!" Activity

Count the total number of children in your group. (Let's say you have 12.) Decide how many children you want on each team. Divide that number (Let's say it's 4) into your total number of children. (In this case 12 divided by 4 = 3.) So, count up to 3 over and over like 1,2,3, 1,2,3 1,2,3 until all the children have been assigned. Then have all of the 1's go to one part of the room, all of the 2's go to another part, and all of the 3's go to another part. Provide each group with a sheet of paper and a pencil. Tell the groups to:

Spend about 10 minutes brainstorming a list of positive stuff about your parents like: the reasons you love them, the fun things you have done with them, what your admire about them, special holiday memories with them, etc.

Have one member of your group be the secretary and write down the ideas the group thinks of. *(Or have everyone try to remember if the group is not capable of writing.)*

Bring the groups back together and share the ideas from each group. Explain that these are reasons we should love and appreciate our parents now and that they are the kinds of things we will try to remember if a parent dies.

Situations To Discuss With Your Group:

I knew a girl whose daddy died suddenly in a car accident. She cried all the time...at home, at school, on the bus, at soccer practice, and everywhere for at least three months. Was that normal? *Discuss.*

I knew a little boy once whose mommy just ran away and never came back. He cried when he was alone, or thought he was alone. It went on for over a year. Was that normal? *Discuss.*

I knew a teenage boy whose dad died of cancer right on Valentine's Day and he never cried. He just started acting mean to his brothers, sisters, and his mom. Was that normal? *Discuss.*

I knew a girl whose mother never married. The girl didn't know who her father was. She was real sensitive about it. Sometimes she cried. She yelled at anyone who said anything about fathers. Was that normal? *Discuss.*

Yes, all of these are normal. What can we do to help children like these? Do especially nice things, be understanding, listen if they do want to talk, share our own stories if something like that happened to us. **What other ideas do you have? At what point do you think people like these would need professional help?** *Discuss.*

Let's discuss the feelings people have when someone dies:

You may have already given each child the handout or you may now want to give each child a copy of the handout found on page 47.

1. **Sadness**-They miss the person and hate to think they'll never see him/her again.

2. **Anger**-Sometimes they actually get mad at the person for dying. That may seem kind of strange, but it's true. They don't know how they'll make it without them. They feel angry because it seems unfair and they feel abandoned by the parent who died.

3. **Fear**-They're afraid that other people they love will die too and leave them.

4. **Guilt**-They feel guilty because they might have had a fight with the person who died and they might think the fight was their fault. They might not have had a chance to say they were sorry. They may wish they had been nicer to the parent who died. Also, young children sometimes say that they wish a parent was dead. Then if it happens, they believe they caused it.

What can we do about these uncomfortable feelings? *Take suggestions from the children. Ideas are:* talk to the remaining parent, talk to a brother or sister, talk to a grandparent, talk to a friend, talk to a counselor or minister, priest, or rabbi, draw pictures, write stories, exercise, get involved in activities, focus on friends and their problems, focus on the positive, and talk about the good times.

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 4

Separation and Divorce

This section is intended to inform children about the subjects of separation and divorce. It is expected that the children will apply what they have learned to their own situation and that they will better understand the situations of their friends and others.

Who knows what separation is? When parents who are married decide to live apart. **What is divorce?** When people who are married decide to legally end their marriage.

How many of you have been through a separation or a divorce in your family? *Don't force disclosure if they're not comfortable.* **What was it like for you when your parents separated? Divorced?** *Discuss.*

Is it harder on the parents or on the kids? *Variety of responses...try to get them to acknowledge how hard it was on them. Help them realize how hard it was for their parents.*

Yes, it's hard. Are there any <u>good</u> things about separation and divorce? *Let the children lead the discussion.*

What is an ex-husband? The man a woman used to be married to. **What is an ex-wife?** The woman a man used to be married to. **What is an ex-child??????** No such thing! *Discuss the fact that children will always be the children of their parents.* **The video made the statement that children will <u>always</u> be loved by <u>both</u> parents. Do you believe that? Why or why not?** *Discuss.*

Let's talk about who the children of sp families live with. In the past, who did they automatically go with? The mother. **Now 9 out of 10 live with the mother. Why are some children now living with their fathers?** Possibilities: Mothers choose to leave, mothers aren't able to care for their children because of drug problems, health, jobs, fathers have learned more about caring for children and want to do it, etc.

Who can tell us about some custody arrangements they know of?
Encourage a discussion covering the following topics:

1. *sole custody by the mother*
2. *sole custody by the father*
3. *visitations by the non-custodial parent*
4. *joint custody*
    a. *one parent has the children on the weekdays and the other parent has the children on weekends*
    b. *one parent has the children one month and the other has the children the next month*
    c. *one parent has the children for a few months and then the other parent has the children for a few months*
    d. *one parent has the children for the school year and the other has them for the summer, etc.*
    e. *some children stay in their houses and the parents switch!*
    f. **Do you know of some other arrangements?**

Do you think there is one <u>right</u> way? *Discuss.* **Are you satisfied with the way your family does it? What if you're not? What can you do?** *Discuss.*

The video mentioned several problems that might happen when you go to visit your non-custodial parent. Who can remember some of them? *Discuss.* You might have to travel a long way, it might be boring, your parent might go out on a date while you're there, you might miss your other parent and your friends, and you might not have a room of your own. **Have any of those been true for any of you? Have you had any other problems? Tell us about them.** *Discuss.*

Who can share some positives about going to see your non-custodial parent? *Discuss.* You might get to visit a different city and go fun places. You might get private time with one parent. You might have neat stuff there that you don't have at home, etc.

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 5

Problems Most Children of Single Parent Families Have No Matter How Their Families Became Single Parent Families

1. **Money problems**-SP kids may not have the money to live in as nice a home as they might if they were living with both parents. They might not be able to buy as fashionable clothes, shoes, or other stuff. They might not be able to do as many fun activities like movies, ball games, concerts, etc. What can be done? *Discuss.*

2. **Uncomfortable feelings**-**Talking to someone like a counselor, minister, priest, rabbi, neighbor, family member, or friend helps.**

   a. **anger** **It doesn't seem fair, so we get mad. It may help to exercise or pound a pillow. What other ways have you come up with to deal with anger? Do kids or adults ever let anger out in bad ways? How? What are the results?** *Discuss.* Fights, stabbings, shootings, murders, prison, ruined lives, etc.

   b. **guilt** **Kids sometimes think they have caused a death or a break-up. Chances are, they didn't cause marriage problems and they can't fix them no matter how hard they try. It's a grown-up thing. Can you think of any times when it is appropriate for a child to feel guilty about the breakup of the parents' marriage or the death of a parent?** *Brainstorm.*

c. **fear** **Some of the fears mentioned were that nobody would know how to cook, that nobody would be there to protect them from "bad guys" or from fire, and that the other parent might die or run away leaving them all alone. Anyone willing to share a time when they were afraid?** *Discuss.*

d. **rejection** Children often feel rejected by the parent who leaves even if there seems to be a good reason and it is carefully explained. Children even feel rejected when a parent dies from a sickness or an accident. It doesn't exactly make sense, but that's the way they feel. **Has anybody here felt that way?** *Discuss.*

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 6

Seven Serious Problems
Children Sometimes Have To Face

Here are some serious things that sometimes happen to children. Let's try to think what it must be like for these children. Let's also try to think of what they should do. If you've ever had these problems, and you feel comfortable sharing what happened with the group, please do.

1. **Their parent divorces and remarries several times.** *Discuss.* **The suggested answer from the videotape was: "Go with the flow." What does that mean? Do you think that's good advice?** *Discuss.*

2. **Their needs for food, clothing, and a place to stay are not being met.** *Discuss.* **The suggested answer from the videotape was: "That could be neglect. They need to call Protective Services, or whatever the agency is in their area, so they can get help." Do you have an agency like that where you live? If so, what is it?** *Discuss.* **Are there any possible reasons why it might <u>not</u> be a good idea to report the problem to the authorities? Do you think children actually do call these agencies themselves or do they need some help from someone else they trust?** *Discuss.*

3. **Some adult is abusive to them or their brother or sister.** *Discuss.* **The suggested answer from the videotape was: "They should report it to Protective Services immediately." Do you agree with that? Are there any possible problems with doing that? Do you think a child would make a report to Protective Services himself/herself?** *Discuss.*

4. **They start taking drugs to escape.**
Discuss. **The suggested answer from the videotape was: "They should get help from their school counselor or someone else they trust." They should, but will they??? *Discuss.***

5. **Their parent totally falls apart when the husband or wife dies.**
Discuss. **The suggested answer from the videotape was: "They should try to get their parent help from the doctor." Do you think that's a realistic suggestion? Can you think of any others? *Discuss.***

6. **Their parent has drug, alcohol, mental, or physical problems.**
Discuss. **The suggested answer from the videotape was: "Instead of trying to be their parent, nagging, or throwing out their cigarettes or liquor, they should try to convince the parent to seek help from a professional." What do you think about this one? Do kids ever "play parent" to their parents? *Discuss.***

7. **Their parent, one of their brothers or sisters, or they themselves might feel really bad, bad enough to run away or even want to die.**
Discuss. **The suggested answer from the videotape was:**

"They should call:

Covenant House at 1-800-999-9999

Youth Crisis at 1-800-442-HOPE

Child Abuse at 1-800-422-4453

or any emergency crisis center or suicide hotline in their community and someone will help." *Discuss.*
It's important that you make this discussion realistic and applicable to your clients and your community.

You may want to use the "Dear Al" activities found on pages 51-57.

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 7

How Single Parent Parents May Feel

Here's a nine-point peek at what it might be like for your single parent. *You may have already given, or you may want to give, each child a copy of the handout found on page 48.*

1. **They may be lonely and confused.**
   Has your parent seemed lonely or confused? How can you tell?

2. **They might do some kind of weird things while they're getting used to being single. They might:**

   a. **Seem uninterested in you.**
      That might be especially hard if you're needing closeness.

   b. **Start drinking or doing drugs.**
      That might upset you and mess things up for your family.
      How could it "mess things up?" *Discuss.*

   c. **Go on an exercise or health kick.**
      They might even try to get you to join them!

   d. **Get on an organization or cleanliness kick.**
      Uh, oh, watch out!

   e. **Change jobs.**
      Lots of possible changes here!

   f. **Move.**
      Maybe even to a different city or state! Good news or bad news for you?

g. **Change hairstyles.**
He/She might not even look like the parent you've always known!

h. **Go back to school.**
This is very common and might mean less time for you because your parent is studying.

i. **Spend time with new friends.**
Who are they?

j. **Start dating.**
That's a big one....we'll get to that later....

3. **Parents may stay mad at each other for a long time, so they may not want to talk to you about each other. They have to work it out. Has that happened to anyone here?** *Discuss.*

4. **You may like being a team with your single parent, but you need to remember that adults need time with adults. Have any of you ever felt hurt or left out when your parent wanted to do something with other adults?** *Discuss.*

5. **If one of your parents has died, it's hard on you, but try to remember that your parent lost their spouse and probably his/her best friend. He/She will need lots of understanding and patience.**

6. **Have you noticed how tired your parent is at the end of the day? Trying to work a job and then take care of everything at home, including you and so many chores, is exhausting. Try to be sensitive to how tired your parent is.**

7. **The Dating Game is tricky for everyone. Parents need to make the decision about when and who they're going to date, whether the kids agree or not. Have any of your parents begun to date? What is it like for you?** *Discuss.*

8. **The people your parents are dating may not know how to deal with children. They might not feel comfortable with you and they may not know how to treat you. Some ignore you, some spoil you, and some may start acting like they are your parent right away. Who has had some experience with this? What was it like? What did you do?** *Discuss.*

9. **It's really hard for single parents to give their children all the attention they wish they could give. If you are feeling left out, try to put yourself in your parent's shoes. You'll probably see that your parent is probably trying to meet everyone else's needs but his/her own. What could you do to try to help meet some of your parent's needs? When you focus on someone else's situation, your own usually looks better.**

TAPE FADES TO BLACK FOR TWO SECONDS FOR POSSIBLE BREAK

SECTION 8

Suggestions for Children in Single Parent Families

You may have already given out the handout or you may want to give each child a copy of the handout found on page 49.

1. **Help your parent find some free time by offering to do a chore he/she usually does. Can your think of some examples that you could do?** Wash dishes, do laundry, vacuum, cook, clean, mow the lawn, sweep, etc. *(Make sure the suggestions are developmentally appropriate.)*

2. **The videotape said, "If one parent gives you lots of stuff and lets you do lots of things, don't go back to the other parent and brag." Let's talk about this one. Do you remember the look on the lady's face when her daughter started showing all the stuff her dad had bought her? Have you seen that look before? When?** *Discuss.*

Has it been your experience that one parent did give you lots of presents while the other one didn't? What are some of the gifts you've gotten? *Discuss.* **What did you think? What did you do?** *Discuss.*

Do you get to do more fun things at one parent's home than at the other's? Can you see any reasons why that happens? *Discuss.*

Do you tell your parent about life at the other parent's? Why or why not? *Discuss.* **Is there a difference between telling and bragging?** *Discuss.* **What happens when you tell your other parent about it? Does it help you or your parent?** *Discuss.*

3. **Has one of your parents ever grilled you about what the other parent did and who the parent did it with? What did you say? Was it uncomfortable for you?** *Discuss.* **What did the videotape suggest that you say if that happens?** Something like, "If you want to know about Dad's private life, please ask him yourself." **Can you see yourself saying that or is that too grown-up for you? What would happen? If not, what else could you say?** *Discuss.*

4. **Does one of your parents ever get real mad and start telling you about how bad the other parent is? How do you handle it?** *Discuss.* **Do you remember what the videotape suggested?** Say, "I can understand that you're angry, but I don't like hearing about how bad my dad/mom is." **Does that sound like something you would really say? If not, what else could you say and still sound like you?** *Discuss.*

5. **What if a grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, or cousin starts criticizing your parent? Has it ever happened to you?** *Discuss.* **What did you do?** *Discuss.* **What did the videotape suggest saying?** Something like, "I like visiting you, but please don't say bad things about my dad around me." **How does that sound to you?** *Discuss.*

6. **If your parent often needs to blow off steam, should you always be the one they blow off to?** *Discuss.* It's probably best if you suggest that they talk to a professional. You need to be a child.

7. **Dr. Edward DeWindt-Robson said that single parents are tempted to try to do everything for their children, including buying them all the latest toys, clothes, and name brand shoes. As a kid, it's pretty tempting to let that happen or even to ask for it. Do you think it's good for kids to get everything they want?** It takes a strong child to see the games that parents sometimes play by trying to bribe the children. It would be much healthier (and less expensive!) if children looked for parents to show true signs of love and respect by spending time with their children and by showing an interest in the things that are important to the children.

8. *(If they can't write.)* **What activities make you feel good? Raise your hand if you want to share.** *(If they can write.) Distribute the worksheet on page 50 that says "I FEEL GOOD WHEN.... ."* **Write down the things that make you feel good.** *After your group has written them down, encourage them to share orally. You may want to write them on the flip chart or chalkboard.* **Remember, it's often better to focus on the things that make you feel good and what's right with your life, than on what is wrong with your life.**

What did you think about the line that said, "Think positively. When you think good things, good things happen!" *Discuss. Let's all try to make good things happen!!!*

END OF VIDEOTAPE

III. CONCLUSION

If your children are developmentally ready to have written their ideas down, do this section based on the handout, "My Own Plan." If not, do this section orally and base it on what they remember.

1. **Now, we have talked about the video. Let's take a look at the worksheet you did while you watched the video. It was called "My Own Plan."** *(If they were developmentally ready to write them down.)*

2. **First look on the left side of your paper entitled, "Things I Already Do Well." For every item you listed, congratulate yourself.**

3. **Now look on the right side at the list of ideas you are going to try. We can't change everything all at once, so decide which one you think is the most important. Put a number 1 next to that one.**

4. **Rank the rest by numbering them 2, 3, 4, etc.**

5. **Plan to work on one new goal each week. Are you willing to make a promise to <u>yourself</u> today to do that?**

Would you also be willing to make a promise to <u>someone</u> <u>else</u> in this room? *(Pause)* **If you would, then do it now. Tell someone what you're going to work on. Telling someone else will help you to keep your promise to yourself.** *(Give the children time to promise to someone else that they're going to work on a specific suggestion.)*

6. **When you get home, put your list where you will see it every day. Look at it every morning, decide on your goal for the day, and promise yourself to <u>keep</u> <u>on</u> <u>trying</u> to make things better for you and your family!**

Good luck!

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Successful Parenting

Hello again!

Thank you again for using this videotape and Facilitator's Guide. I hope you'll consider using other tapes, guides, and other materials in the SUCCESSFUL PARENTING *series.*

I welcome any comments, concerns, or suggestions regarding this tape, this Facilitator's Guide, or my approach and how they worked for you.

I'd also love to find out about the specific ways you've used my materials. Success stories keep me going! I love to share your ideas with others too.

I welcome ideas for future videos and workshops. Please do let me hear from you.

Write to me at:

Successful Parenting
3224 Linda Circle
Winston-Salem, NC 27106

Call or fax me at:

910-748-8877

Thanks!

Barbara Lynn

APPENDIX

_____
_____
_____

Dear_____,

I am doing a workshop for children who live in single parent families. I hope that by learning about single parent families and by sharing with other children in the workshop, you'll be able to make your family life better and your future more positive.

We'll watch an interesting, realistic video called, "The Single Parent Family: A Challenge for Children," do some fun activities, and discuss ideas and experiences with each other. The workshop will be:

Location_____

Day(s)/date(s)_____

Time_____

Your presence would add a lot to our group. Please consider joining us. If you are interested, talk to your parent or guardian and then, if it's okay with him/her, you may either:

1. fill in the form below and send it to me
2. call me and tell me (My phone # is_____)
3. come by and talk to me about it

I hope you will be a part of my workshop.

Sincerely,

- - - -

TO: _____

FROM: _____

DATE: _____

RE: Workshop for children in single parent families

I give my permission for:

_____

to participate in the workshop for children in single parent families.

Signed:

Name_____

Relationship to child_____

Address_____

_____

Home phone number_____

Work phone number_____

Best way to contact _____

_____

Dear _____,

Thank you for allowing _____to be part of my Workshop for Children in Single Parent Families.

I feel confident that by learning about single parent families and by sharing with each other, the children in the workshop will gain tools that will help them make family life better today and will help them make their futures more positive.

Here is the information about the workshop:

Location_____

Day(s)/date(s)_____ _____

_____ _____

Time_____ _____

Please feel free to call me or come see me if you have any questions or concerns.

My phone number is _____

My office is_____ _____

Thank you.

Sincerely,

My Own Plan

THINGS I ALREADY DO WELL	*THINGS I'M GOING TO TRY*

DEFINITIONS

Child support	The money needed to raise a child. One parent pays it to the other.
Custodial parent	The parent responsible for the care of the child after a divorce.
Non-custodial parent	The parent the child doesn't live with.
Joint custody	When the parents share in the care and responsibility for the child.
SP families	Families headed by one parent. The SP stands for "Single Parent."
Visitation rights	Permission for a non-custodial parent to visit with his/her child.
Widow	A woman whose husband died.
Widower	A man whose wife died.
Pregnant	When a woman has a baby growing inside of her.
Adopt	When an adult legally takes a child as his/her own.

FEELINGS PEOPLE HAVE WHEN SOMEONE DIES

Sadness	They miss the person and hate to think they'll never see him/her again.
Anger	Sometimes they actually get mad at the person for dying. That may seem kind of strange, but it's true. They don't know how they'll make it without them. They feel angry because it seems unfair and they feel abandoned by the deceased parent.
Fear	They might be afraid that other people they love will die and leave them too.
Guilt	They might feel guilty because they had a big fight with the person who died and they might think the fight was their fault. They might not have had a chance to say they were sorry. They might wish they had been nicer to the parent who died. Also, young children sometimes say that they wish a parent was dead. Then if it happens, they believe they caused it.

HOW SINGLE PARENTS MAY FEEL

1. They might be lonely and confused.

2. They might do "weird" things while they're getting used to being single.

   Like:
   a. Seem uninterested in you
   b. Start drinking or doing drugs
   c. Go on an exercise or health kick
   d. Get on an organization or cleanliness kick
   e. Change jobs
   f. Move
   g. Change hairstyles
   h. Go back to school
   i. Make new friends
   j. Start dating

3. Parents may stay mad at each other for a long time so they may not want to talk to you about each other. They have to work it out themselves.

4. You may like being a team with your single parent, but you need to remember that adults need time with other adults.

5. If one of your parents has died, it's hard on you, but try to remember that your parent lost their spouse and probably his/her best friend. He/She will need lots of understanding and patience.

6. Have you noticed how tired your parent is at the end of the day? Trying to work a job and then take care of everything at home including you and so many chores is exhausting. Try to be sensitive to how tired your parent is.

7. The Dating Game is tricky for everyone. Parents need to decide when and who they're going to date, whether the kids agree or not.

8. The people your parents are dating may not know how to deal with children. They might not feel comfortable with you and they may not know how to treat you. Some may ignore you, some may spoil you, and some may start acting like they're your parent right away.

9. It's really hard for single parents to give their children all the attention they wish they could give. If you are feeling left out, try to put yourself in your parent's shoes. You'll see that your parent is probably trying to meet everyone else's needs except his/her own.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHILDREN IN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

1. Help your parent find some free time by offering to do a chore he/she usually does.

2. If one parent gives you lots of stuff and lets you do lots of things, don't go back to the other parent and brag.

3. If one of your parents grills you about what the other parent did and who the parent did it with, say something like, "If you want to know about Dad's/Mom's private life, please ask him/her yourself."

4. If one of your parents gets real mad and starts telling you about how bad the other parent is, say something like, "I can see that you're angry, but I don't like hearing about how bad my dad/mom is."

5. If a grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, or cousin starts criticizing your parent, say something like, "I like visiting you, but please don't say bad things about my dad around me."

6. If your parent often needs to blow off steam, it's probably best if you suggest that they talk to a professional.

I FEEL GOOD WHEN.....

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

"DEAR AL" ACTIVITIES

Here are some simple tools that can be used to help children talk about and learn about Seven Serious Problems Children Sometimes Have To Face, discussed on pages 30 and 31. How you use them depends on your work setting, the clients with whom you work, and, of course, your personal preference. These activities can be intense, so use with care!

The "Dear Al" cards can be used to stimulate discussion and to impart information with children and their families in: Family Support Centers, Residential Child Care settings, Family-Centered Case Work situations, Family Preservation situations, and Family Support settings, in schools by social workers or professional school counselors, by department of social services workers in their offices or in their clients' homes, or in Child Abuse Prevention Centers.

There are two activities that can be done with individual children. First, the professional or the child selects a card and reads it. Then they discuss it with each other. A second possibility is that the child selects a card, reads it, and then writes the answer. When there are pairs of children, they can alternate drawing cards and can talk the issues over together.

Where there is a larger group of children together, one possibility is that the leader reads a series of "Dear Al" cards as stimuli for discussion.

Another possibility where there is a group of children together, such as in a school or a Family Support Center, is that the cards can be used in the following activity. This activity works best if the children are verbal and willing to take a risk in role-playing.

"Dear Al" Group Activity

To prepare for the activity, *photocopy the "HANDLE LIKE A PROFESSIONAL" card, the "HANDLE LIKE A NERD" card, (You may want to choose a different word than "nerd".) and the "Dear Al" cards. Mount your copies on cardboard. You may want to have a child color the cards. You may wish to laminate them. Cut out all the cards. You're ready for the activity.*

Explain *that the members of the group are now going to do an activity that will help everyone understand more about the serious problems children sometimes have to face....and at the same time, have some fun. Select two children, preferably volunteers, to do a role play. Let them decide who will play a child and who will play a helper.*

Conceal the "PROFESSIONAL" and the "NERD" cards in your hands behind your back and let one of the two volunteers choose a hand. If the volunteer chooses the "PROFESSIONAL" card, the volunteers must do the role play as best they can, showing a good or "right" way to handle the situation. In other words, they'll do the role play like a professional would.

If they pick the "NERD" card, they may still choose to handle it well or they can choose to do it in a funny, silly, absurd, or just plain "wrong" way. In other words, they have the choice of doing the role play like a nerd would.

Now fan out the stack of "Dear Al" cards. Let the second volunteer pick the card that tells which problem their team will act out. Have the two children on that team read the card silently. If either child is too uncomfortable with the subject of the card, allow the child to "bail out" and pick another card. After reading the new card silently, have the child read the "Dear Al" letter on the card out loud.

Tell them they will have a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of four minutes to act out their "Dear Al" situation. Give them one minute to discuss their plan privately. Then start the role play. Time them.

Be sure the group always applauds when the team stops role playing. Remember, they took a big risk just to get up there.

Take time to debrief the way the team handled the problem. Apply the things said and done to real life.

Dear Al,

My mother has just come home with her fifth man in 3 years. This guy is creepy. I'm tired of just getting used to a man living here, and then, bam, he's gone. Mom wants me to be nice to him and happy for her, but I just can't. What should I do?

"Displaced Dude From Durham"

Dear Al,

Dad did it again. He came home last night with this girl ten years younger than he is and announced that they might get married. He dumped Mom when I was three and it's been one woman after another ever since. How can I take all this?

"Got More Sense Than The Old Man In Houston"

Dear Al,

I'm a 7 year old boy. Mom was going out with this great guy. He was nice to me and my dog. He played ball with me and he helped me with my homework. I was just about to ask 'em to take me to the Father/Son Night at school. And what happened? Mom had a fight with 'em and told 'em never to come back. What about me?

"Mine Too In Miami"

Dear Al,

I don't know what to do. Mom's been out of work for 6 months now and our money is all gone. The only food I get is free lunch at school and I don't think Mom is eating at all. I heard her say the landlord is kicking us out. I saw a letter from Social Services. They're threatening to take me away. I don't know what will happen to my little brother and sister. I'm afraid we'll never see each other again. What can I do?

"Panicked in Pittsburgh"

Dear Al,

My brother and sister and I are living in an abandoned school bus. It's not much, but it's dry and warm. Dad comes by every once in a while, but then he's usually drunk. I don't know where mom is. What should I do?

"Fourteen and Man of the House in Baton Rouge"

Dear Al,

This is hard to say and nobody else believes me. My uncle bothers me and my sister. She's 6 and I'm 8. He touches us in private places. Then he says we shouldn't tell. I want to tell my mom but I'm scared. I hate it, but I don't know what to do. Please, please, please help me.

"Mixed-up & Scared in Sacramento"

Dear Al,

My life stinks. Mom's a drunk, Dad's in jail. Our house is a pig sty and I'm hungry all the time. My girlfriend just ran off with a jerk in my English class. I just want to get away from it all. A bottle of booze, and I forget. When I sober up, I know what I'm doin' is no good, but I don't know what else to do. Is there any hope for me?

"Making the Great Escape in Minneapolis"

Dear Al,

I thought my mom was a strong person, but when dad got killed in a car accident six months ago, she fell apart. All she does is cry and she won't come out of her room. I don't know what to do.

"I Lost Him Too in New York City"

Dear Al,

I live with my mom, but I may as well be on my own. She hangs out with her friends and gets high. People run in and out of the house all the time doing crazy stuff. I'm scared for my little brothers and sisters. I'm sick of living this way. My friends don't live this way. They have parents who do right and take care of them. Don't I deserve that too?

"Disgusted in Denver"

Dear Al,

I've had it. I'm 13 years old and my life is a mess. My parents split up when I was 8 and I never see Dad. Guess he forgot me. Mom works all the time. She never has time for me. I have to do all the work around here. I clean up. I have to take care of the little kids. I cook. I do the wash. I never get to hang with my friends. You know what I mean? My 10-year-old sister blames everything on me. If Mom says anything, it's to yell at me. It's not fair. I've had it. I'm leaving this dump. I saved up some money. I'm catching a bus tonight. That'll show 'em. Just wanted to tell someone. Thanks, Al.

"Excess Baggage in Washington, DC"

HANDLE LIKE A PROFESSIONAL!

HANDLE LIKE A NERD!

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